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ABOUT THE MENA REPORT

The MENA Report, published monthly by The Cordoba Foundation, provides unique insights and analysis of events and developments in the Middle East and North Africa. Seeking to provide impartial, accurate and authoritative content and analysis. We do this through The Cordoba Foundation's unique access to rare and highly important primary sources in the Middle East and beyond.



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Founded in 2005, The Cordoba Foundation (TCF) is an independent Public Relations, Research and Training unit, which promotes dialogue and the culture of peaceful and positive coexistence among civilisations, ideas and people. We do this by working with decision-making circles, researchers, religious leaders, the media, and a host of other stakeholders of society for better understanding and clearer comprehension of inter-communal and inter-religious issues in Britain and beyond.

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WELCOME

The fast unfolding events and developments in the Middle East and North Africa can be confusing to those who monitor events from outside the region. Politics and events in the Middle East tend to be a flux, irregular and usually conducted in a covert fashion. For example, whilst, Iran, Hezbollah, Algeria, Iraq and the Sudan consider Israel as their arch enemy, they are all in agreement with their policies towards dealing with the Syrian crisis. Oddly enough, monarchist regimes such Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain -- with capitalist-based economies and with little known tradition or legal infrastructure to enshrine political and human rights for their citizens -- have been instrumental in supporting the Syrian people to free the country of its dictatorship.

Concurrently the latter group of monarchies has deep schisms among themselves when it comes to dealing with the outcomes of the Yemeni and Egyptian

revolutions. The Saudi and the UAE government used their financial muscle, backed by powerful satellite and print media, to stoke-up trouble for the newly-elected Brotherhood-led government in Egypt. On the contrary, Qatar has been instrumental in using its financial leverage to stabilise the government of President Muhammad Mursi.

Much of the old and on-going politics in the Middle East and North Africa have and continue to be conducted with reference to identity politics. Ideology has played a critical role in the past 70 years in destabilising the region. In the 1950s and 1960s, Arab monarchies fought a losing battle with Arab nationalism, thus paving the way to leftist and socialist regimes that lacked legitimacy as well as a sense of economic or political direction. The 1970s brought about another change of ideological direction with the rise of political Islam, helped by the communications revolution and the mass media which



In Egypt... the popular temperance and tendencies of the population seems to onlookers from the outside to be overtly religious with political Islam taking centre-stage.

has exposed the masses to foreign media, and different political models and lifestyles.

All of the above in turn has helped hasten the downfall of regimes based on nationalistic ideology that have failed the ordinary citizen in every single aspect of his or her life, ushering a new dawn of popular politics. However, the boundaries and shape of the forthcoming political systems are fluid. The variation in national political and religious cultures makes it extremely difficult to predict the outcomes.

In Egypt for example, the popular temperance and tendencies of the population seems to onlookers from the outside to be overtly religious with political Islam taking centre-stage. Nonetheless, the past few months have proved that religiosity should have been given a deeper thought and analysis. It is apparent that the majority of Egyptians consciously or unconsciously

divide Islam into two tiers, the ritualistic and day-to-day religiosity (*ibadaat*) and the political system they choose to live under.

While in Libya, the case is slightly different. In Libya, regional and tribal politics tied to the locality and the abundance of natural resources will play strong role in deciding the shape and nature of the future political system.

In a region where non-democratic tribal and sometimes theology-based regimes are still dominant, it will be very difficult to use a single political theory or systemic approach to reach a better understanding of the policies and alignment patterns. What is more important and has been obvious in the past few years is the continuous struggle between different groups of interests and ideologies within one state or community to win the idea of what constitutes a unifying national identity.

In the absence of a population traditionally accustomed to the democratic culture, practices, institutions and rights, the politically and religiously educated minority groups will continue to decide the outcome of the struggle in the Middle East as has always been the case.

Dr Fareed Sabri
HEAD OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA PROGRAMME
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TURKEY'S INCREASING CREDIBILITY AND POLITICAL CLOUT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Turkey dominated politics in the Middle East and parts of Europe for centuries up until the First World War when Turkey sided with the Germans with catastrophic consequences. The Ottoman army was badly defeated in the Eastern front against the Russians in the battle of Sarikamis January 2, 1915. While on the Western front they were forced to defend their homeland against the British and the French at the Dardanelles, victory was on the side of the Turks, as they displayed heroic resistance forcing the British and the French to retreat with heavy casualties on both sides.

From the early 18th century, Turkey's prowess as an empire and military power started to decline after it began to fall behind technologically compared to the West. The wars it previously fought in the West and North were with mainly Christian powers. On the Eastern front, it engaged in a series of wars with the religious Shi'i Safavid Empire in Iran. These wars, as most of the wars during that period, were based on a religious divides. This was primarily to assert, convert and spread the religious identity, in addition to the normal and ubiquitous aim of land grabbing.

After the decline of its military power, Turkey's wars, especially with Russia were fought to preserve the very existence of the Ottoman Empire. This premonition of danger prompted the Turkish Republic after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1924 to seek a non-aligned foreign policy in the Second World War. It then joined NATO to shore-up its defences against Russia and the Eastern Bloc. The end of the Cold War signalled the collapse of the deep differences between the Western and Eastern blocs. Turkey's position became more precarious with the clear and continued rejection of the European Union to admit it to its ranks. NATO became the last line of defence for the Turkish secular politicians and political strategists before the arrival of the Islamist-leaning government in 2002 led by the Development and Justice Party (AKP).

The AKP famous strategy of zero differences with Turkey's neighbors has clearly not been very successful. In the past ten years Turkey has tried to enhance its strategic depth by creating new alliances with Arab and Muslim countries. However the religious divide and rivalry with Iran proved

very difficult to bridge. Turkey's support for the Syrian people against the minority Shi'i-led government gained it deep animosity from allies of the Syrian regime in Iraq and Iran. Without Syria, Turkey will be land-locked between Russia from the North and a tough religious rival in the South from Iran to Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. The success of the Syrian revolution is vitally important to Turkey. Without a shadow of a doubt the Syrian regime will use the millions of Shi'i Alawites in the southern part of Turkey to stir-up trouble similar the Kurdish PKK separatist organisation.

With increasing concerns and doubts over the success of the Syrian revolution since the West denied it the vital supplies of weapons, financial aid and logistics, the Turkish government struck a deal with the PKK. On March 21, the Jailed Kurdish Workers' Party leader Abdullah Öcalan called for a cease-fire. This truce will free the Turkish policy-makers' hands and give them space, time and resources to be directed in dealing with the Syrian crisis.

It is not in Turkey's interest for the conflict in Syria to drag

on and turn into a civil war akin to what happened in neighbouring Lebanon in the 1980s and 1990s. The spill-over effect will open a new front for the Turkish government against their Alawite minority in the South West of the country. Historically the Alawites were considered by the religious Shi'i authority in Iraq and Iran as a heretical creed. However after the Iranian revolution in 1979, the religious and political Shi'i authorities in Iran realised the strategic importance of Alawites in Syria and Southern Turkey. The Alawites were embraced as another legitimate Shi'i faction but at the same time the religious establishment in Iran embarked on a campaign to convert the Alawites to the core Shi'i beliefs of the Ithna Ashariya Maddhab (Twelver Imams). The strong religious ties between the Alawite minority regime in Syria and the Shi'i government in Iran stood the test of time and proved to be strategically vital for the Iranian regime in the past 35 years.

Syrian foreign policy practically turned into a carriage tied-up to the Iranian engine. In the eight year-war between Iran and Iraq, the Syrians were the main lifelines of logistical



The last thing the Israelis want is an angry Turkish government that could use Syria's potential in creating trouble for the Israelis along the long borders between the two countries.

support for Iran against their Arab brethren in Iraq. Religion to the secular Arab nationalists in Syria proved far more important than the ideal of pan-Arabism. Identity politics as we stipulated earlier proved yet again to be the matrix of politics in the region: Turkey, Jordan and Saudi Arabia realised this fact. On that account it is vitally important for these governments to sever links between Syria and Iran through establishing a new government that will proportionally represent the Sunni majority.

The latest Israeli apology for the killing of nine Turks in a 2010 naval raid on the Gaza-bound flotilla and the normalisation of relations after three years of estrangement is an admission that Turkey is gaining ground in Syria. The last thing the Israelis want is an angry Turkish government that could use Syria's potential in creating trouble for the Israelis along the long borders between the two countries.

There is also the economic dimension to mend of relations between the two countries. Unconfirmed news from within the Turkish government indicates that there have been

discoveries of large deposits of natural gas off the shores of Turkey in the Mediterranean Sea. To explore, produce, ship and lay supply pipelines political stability and cooperation with regional powers is essential. Israel will be in dire need of the gas and oil supplies since it cannot rely on Egypt after the collapse of Mubarak regime.

Some political analysts proposed that the Israeli backtrack is in preparation for an imminent attack against Iranian nuclear facilities. However it is highly unlikely that Israel has the logistical and technological ability to sustain a concerted attack for days or weeks against the well-spread and heavily-protected research centres and nuclear facilities in Iran. Since 2010, the American strategy in the Middle East has been to reduce its direct engagements in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Gulf region. Their War on Terrorism took a different phase with their increased dependence on drone attacks against suspected Islamist militants in the Yemen, Somalia and Afghanistan.

It is highly unlikely that the American Administration will



commit to any major engagement in the region before their troops have withdrawn from Afghanistan in 2014. The best option at their disposal for the time being is to use sanctions and Cold War tactics against the Iranian regime. Adding to the above, the latest spat of nuclear threats and counter threat with North Korea has complicated matters for the Administration and diverted their attention towards the Korean peninsula for months to come. There is no doubt that Russia and China have been successful in the past few years in using the Syrian, Iranian and Korean quandaries to throw American strategists off balance.

For Turkey to continue its strong influence over the Middle East, it has to continue its policy of constitutional reform and shake the very foundation of the pure Turkish identity as envisaged by Kamal Ataturk in 1922. Modern Turkey denied minorities their cultural and political rights under the pretext of securing the Turkish identity and the integrity of the state's borders. The current Islamist Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan will have an uphill struggle to convince the secular parties such as the Republican People's Party and the

Nationalist Movement Party with their proposed changes to the constitution and concessions to minority Kurds. Secular Turkish identity and politics might well lead to the renewed violence and the degradation of Turkey's foreign policy and influence in the region.

IRANIAN NUCLEAR PROGRAMME: INSURANCE POLICY FOR THE REGIME'S SURVIVAL

Iran is governed by a number of interrelated power centres, some of which are official (e.g. constitutional government) and others unofficial (e.g. the politico-religious institutions and semi-military forces under the leadership of influential clergy). The president is entrusted with running the day-to-day affairs of the country and has no authority in determining strategic foreign and domestic politics, or any control over the army or security apparatuses. All of these apparatuses fall within the jurisdiction of the Supreme leader who runs the country through a network of clergy in collaboration with the office of the president. Unofficial centres of power control the direction of Iranian politics through the person of the president who has very little say in these matters. This decision-making dualism gives rise to many conflicts in Iran with the likelihood of a full-blown confrontation one day between the Supreme leader and the Guardian Council on the one hand and the parliament on the other.

The official constitutional leadership of Iran comprises a number of institutions: the Assembly of Experts, the

Supreme Leader, the president, the parliament, the cabinet, the judiciary, state radio and television, the army, the Revolutionary Guards and the security apparatuses.

The unofficial centers of power comprise of four overlapping entities: the centre is represented by the most influential clergy in parliament, the government, *shura councils* and the judiciary. The second entity is made up of the highest-ranking officials other than the clergy. The third entity comprises figures from the revolutionary committees, the *Basij*, security apparatuses, and senior media officials. The fourth one is represented by civil society figures and former government officials. This last one mediates between the regime and civil society, demanding social and political reforms peacefully and from within the system.

All of these entities are controlled by the Revolutionary Islamic leadership made up of clergy and other figures. It would be reductionist to label either of the two parties as moderate or extreme since their positions tend to shift according to the issues at hand. Iranians, however, refer to

the two sides from the “Islamic left” or the “new left”, and the “Islamic right” or “progressive right-wing”.

Despite all this clash of interests, Iran has succeeded in securing strategic victories such as its gains in Iraq and Afghanistan, Bahrain, Yemen, and the eastern parts of Saudi Arabia all almost under the sway of Iranian religious and political influence. Syria however, will in all likelihood, be a huge setback for Iran once the revolution there ousts the regime, in effect severing Iran's ties with the Shiites in Lebanon - almost thirty five years of hard work will be totally wasted.

Iran's pursuit of exporting its political and religious identity gained it international and regional animosity. The political and religious tensions are reflected inside Iran and among its different ethnic and religious groupings. Locally, the Iranian government is in desperate need to unite the different ethnicities and religious groups that make the society around the nuclear issue which is considered as a matter of national pride. It would have been very difficult to

convince the Sunni Kurds, the Belushis, and the ethnic Arabs, or the Azeris to unite around the Shi'i identity of the state's leadership. The war with Iraq in the 1980s cemented the religious leadership's hold over power. The regime managed to direct and channel people's emotions, efforts and anger against those who questioned the authority and the very existence of the regime. The external threat was religiously and politically framed as a direct threat to the very identity of the Iranians as a sovereign and independent nation. All of the opposition from within or outside the establishment, including the Kurdish insurrection, the Communists and Mujahidin-e-Khalq, were either side-lined or quelled in the name of the preservation of national identity.

On the international level, the Iranian regime believes that it is targeted by the United States, Israel and the West in general. Many Iranian officials questioned this animosity, despite their undenied efforts in helping the Americans invade Iraq and Afghanistan. The nuclear issue is obviously their best insurance policy against any Western incursion or attempts to destabilise the regime. In a meeting with

members of the Assembly of Experts on Leadership, the Supreme leader Ali al-Khamenei commented on the talks with the P5+1 powers in Almaty and said, "The West did not do anything special that could be constituted as giving a right at these talks. The West didn't make enough acknowledgment of the right of our nation."

The nuclear issue is portrayed to the Iranian people as a challenge to the very existence of the state when the Supreme leader described the talks over the nuclear issue as a challenge for the regime and that the regime will come out at the end as the winning party.

In the past few years the Iranian government exaggerated its technological advances and its capability to enrich Uranium beyond 20 per cent. Photoshop and image enhancement techniques were used by the Iranian Ministry of Defense to claim unfounded technological advances¹. The example of the new Iranian stealth bomber was a huge embarrassment when a blogger discovered that the jet had actually been superimposed upon snowy mountains using Photoshop.

Another attempt to prove their ability to manufacture Qaher-313, Iran's second domestically-produced plane was also thwarted when experts noticed that the plane was lacking rivets and bolts and that it was made entirely of plastic. It is obvious that Iran is posturing to bolster the national pride and unite around the political and religious leadership. Earlier this month the Iranian Atomic Energy Organisation head Mr Abbasi Davani claimed that the Iranians have the right to enrich Uranium to a purity of 45 per cent and 90 per cent to power its fleet of submarines.

Clearly the international community does not believe the Iranian rhetoric but it is happy to use it against Iran in the IAEA and to further tighten the economic and technological sanctions against Iran.

This is a very dangerous policy previously adopted by Arab nationalist leaders such as Abdul Nasser in Egypt and Saddam Hussein in Iraq. After the end of the Iraq-Iran war in 1988, Saddam exaggerated Iraq's technological and military capability to enhance his image and authority domestically

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There is no way that Israel with its limited logistical, financial and even technological capability is able to launch a sustained and effective attack against Iran.

and regionally. The West and Israel were very happy to play the game and give in to the physiology of the autocratic Middle Eastern leadership to muster international support and legitimacy. Saying all that, Iran is aware of its limits in aggravating the United States and its allies. It has converted the majority of its stockpile of 20% enriched Uranium into reactor fuel, hence damping the international community's fears of further increasing the purity of their enriched stockpile.

The only country which is sabre-rattling and pushing publicly to neutralise the Iranian nuclear capability is Israel, while some Arab countries like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE have been pleading privately with the US to deal with the Iranian threat. As aforementioned, there is no way that Israel with its limited logistical, financial and even technological capability is able to launch a sustained and effective attack against Iran. The public display serves two ends. First, is to solicit extra financial and military hand-outs from the US government that is considered by the Israelis as the least supportive and sympathetic since the 1990s.

Secondly, Israel is pushing hard for the US and its Western allies to carry out the job as they did against Iraq in 1991 and 2003. Israel will not commit to such an endeavour alone even though it realises that Iran's standing and reputation among the Muslims and Arabs has been severely tarnished because of its support for the brutal regime in Syria.

The nuclear threat and proliferation is getting out of hand and those who already have it are reconsidering their nuclear strategies. This policy shift is prompted by the rapid conventional weapons, technological advances and the increased destructive and accurate delivery of such weapons. America's anti-ballistic missile capability and accuracy is reaching a point when the Chinese and Russian nuclear deterrent will be rendered obsolete. On 16 April this year, the Chinese government issued a white paper on defence. In the previous white papers the Chinese government promised never to be the first to use its nuclear arsenal in any circumstances. China entered the nuclear race with its first nuclear test in 1964; however the latest white paper dropped the fifty years old pledge.



This calculated and dangerous policy might well be China's attempt to draw the United States and its allies in the region to sit at a negotiating table akin to Russia's attempt to derail Ronald Regan's Star Wars project. Officially the project was known as the Strategic Defence Initiative or SDI. It was an ambitious and expensive endeavour to use space as a base for a range of missile and laser systems to protect the United States against Russian and Chinese nuclear ballistic missiles.

China is extremely worried about American plans to strengthen and reinforce its missile defence systems in Alaska and the Korean peninsula. The defence strategy is certainly directed towards neutralising the North Korean threat; however the systems will have wide ranging consequences. China's attempt to draw the US into a dialogue has a good chance of resolving complicated and contentious issues in the region. Both superpowers have absolute economic and military influence on their allies in the region. China's soft power in Africa and Asia has grown rapidly in the past decade or so, while the United States'

military presence in Australia and the Indian and Pacific Oceans has been rapidly increasing.

One predicted outcome of any future talks will be the failure to convince the US to slow its investment and development of new military technology. Back in the 1980s the SDI project was slowed down and eventually derailed in the 1990s, mainly as a result of the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and its immediate nuclear threat. Plus the project itself was astronomically expensive and unrealistically futuristic.

1. <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/02/16/195050.html>

http://armscontrolcenter.org/publications/factsheets/fact_sheet_irans_nuclear_and_ballistic_missile_programs/

LIBYA'S VIOLENT PAST IS CASTING A SHADOW ON ITS FUTURE

The collapse of the Libyan regime was a source of hope for many in Libya. Libyans felt that their country had learned from the painful memory of the past 40 years of a brutal regime. Mu'ammar al-Gadhafi stifled all forms of freedom of expression and association. His record on human rights was horrible. However the situation as it stands does not bode well for good governance which everyone in the country clearly yearns for. The plethora of Jihadi organisations, tribal militias and remnants of the Gadhafi regime are slowing down the machinery of the central authority.

The absence of a strong Libyan army, which was the case even during the dictator's rule, is not helping to assert the government's authority. Credible international reports claimed that old practices of human rights violations are becoming more common in Libya. The central government is still unable to exert its full control over oil and natural gas production sites. The weak General National Congress has had to work with the militias and warlords to maintain daily governance of the country.

Libya's vast natural resources are a bliss and source of instability at the same time. A strong and properly representative government will be able to use the country's economic potential to create a new sense of national identity and hopes for the future. Naturally, during the transition period, the different provincial, tribal and ideological forces will compete through coercion and violence to assert their identity on the future of the state and its institutions. Nonetheless, the various competing forces will soon realise that the vast proceeds of Libya's natural resources are still in the hands of the central bureaucracy. Violence will also subside once those who succeed in asserting their identity on the constitution and the state institutions. Their main aim by then will turn to establishing stability through cooperation, loyalty or at-least, some sort of conformity from other political, ideational and tribal forces.

To shed further light on the politics in Libya, *The MENA Report* interviewed a high-ranking European representative of the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood based in the United

Kingdom. We endeavoured to explore the future political outlook of this major Islamic organisation inside Libya. Following the collapse of the old regime, LBM undoubtedly has a strong political and social presence in the country. An Islamic-inspired government in Libya will inadvertently be a moral and financial boost for similar governments in neighbouring Tunisia and Egypt.

TMENAR: *Where do you place the moderate Islamists in the political map of Libya, in particular the Muslim Brotherhood? Are you facing challenges from the media, popular and political challenges similar to Egypt?*

Libyan Muslim Brotherhood: The Libyan Muslim Brotherhood (LMB) is the biggest independent and non-governmental organisation in Libya. In 2011, the movement decided in its 9th General Conference held in Benghazi to debut our political participation through a new independent political entity. The party decided to open up membership to non-affiliates of the LMB and to anyone who is in agreement

with our principles and Islamic authority. Hence the Justice and Construction Party was established with majority of the membership from non-LMB background. The party came second in the National Congress elections on 7 July, 2012. The LMB is present in the current government with five ministers and the deputy Prime Minister.

With respect to the challenges we face in Libya, there are many. In a report published by the Libyan Centre for Research and Development, a question was put to those who did not vote for the Islamists (constituting 80% of the total voters), what their main reason was.

Their answers ranged from:

- 40% - "I fear them"
- 21% - "I don't know them well enough"
- 22% - "They lack figures (or leadership)"



The old and much hated regime used the image of Islam and a number of Islamist organisations to boost its political and religious authority.

8% - "Their manifesto is weak or unconvincing"

6% - "They collaborated with the previous regime"

I believe the main challenges are as follows:

1. Lack of a charismatic leadership. For forty years the Islamists were absent from the political scene in Libya. Polls conducted during the previous elections showed that 90% of the Libyan voters did not know whom to vote for. The democratic experience is still in its infancy.
2. The negative historical image in the Libyan psyche. The old and much hated regime used the image of Islam and a number of Islamist organisations to boost its political and religious authority.
3. The failure of the Islamist organisations to prepare

and promote public and charismatic figures. They also lack proper media and political rhetoric.

4. Some of puritan and rigid Islamists organisations committed unacceptable acts such as the destruction of Sufi tombs. These actions castigated the Islamists and painted a negative picture of Islamists in general.
5. At the regional level, a number of Arab governments are injecting money in Libya to politically side-line the Islamic trends.

TMENAR: *Two years ago the Libyan people rose against Gadhafi seeking to end his tyranny and human rights violations. However, there are credible reports of on-going human rights violations in Libyan prisons. What is your take on this issue? Are these reports credible?*

LMB: I cannot confirm the validity of all these reports,

but without a shadow of a doubt there are wide spread violations. The culture of human right is sadly not present now... The revolutionaries and the security forces are mostly ignorant of the culture, regulations and proper conduct with regards safeguarding people's dignity and human rights. Some blame falls on the shoulder of the international human rights organisations for not contributing in training and educating our people. They concentrated on monitoring the situation rather than assisting in changing the reality.

TMENAR: *What is your opinion about the role of the Islamic Shari'a when writing the constitution? Is your position, in terms of the application of the Shari'a law similar to al-Nahda in Tunis? Is there a consensus in Libya on this matter?*

LMB: The Libyan people are religious; our revolution was instigated with an Islamic slogan and rhetoric. The differences are limited to syntax and linguistic formulation.

TMENAR: *There are tribal and provincial tendencies in*

Libya. Some Libyans prefer the federal structure of the state. What is the position of the moderate Islamists? Do you think federalising Libya could be a transitional solution to ease the tensions and disputes instigated and nurtured by the previous regime?

LMB: Tribal tendencies were exaggerated by the ousted regime. The elections in 7/7/2012 proved my point since those who depended on their tribal background were not successful in the National Congress. The federal system is not suitable for Libya and its proponents are few and not effective.

TMENAR: *Are you worried about the political instability currently plaguing Egypt? Is the latest Libyan loan to the Egyptian government meant to stabilise President Mursi's rule or is it a return favour for Egypt's collaboration to hand fugitives from Gadhafi's regime?*

LMB: Egypt is a strategic country; it is one of the main pillars



of the Arab national security. The success of democracy in Egypt will have a positive effect on neighbouring countries. We call on the different political powers in Egypt to be patient and support the democratic process. Selfish political ends will serve to destabilise Egypt which is the main aim of some external powers.

The relationship between Egypt and Libya is based on a plethora of mutual and shared interests, though I can't deny some of the hypothesis you put earlier in your question.

TMENAR: *The organisation of LMB spent decades in exile in the West. What are the main ideological and political changes that came as a result of your exposure to Western political systems and democracy?*

LMB: Without a doubt, we have learned and gained experience in many fields not just in politics. We gained experience in the media, human rights, social and relief work. However I can claim that the most important aspect

of our experience is our unshakable belief that democracy is the way forward for the stability and development of our societies.

TMENAR: *What is the role of the Islamist organisations in Libya in aiding the Syrian people against the regime of Bashar al-Asad? Do you think the Libyan government is doing enough to support the Syrian people in their struggle?*

LMB: Helping the Syrian revolution is our religious duty first of all. Second, it is a moral and humanistic duty to stop the killing and pressure the regime to end its violence against its people.

I agree with you, the present Libyan government is not doing enough. The instability and the damage caused by the previous regime are the main reasons for this shortcoming.

TMENAR: *There is no doubt that the role of Western countries was vital in helping the Libyans to getting*



We aspire to achieve a pivotal role in the nascent democracy and to work side-by-side with our partners from other political persuasions to establish a civil and progressive Islamic political project

rid of Gadhafi. What was your position on the Western intervention? Do you think there was an intellectual rethink of your ideas in soliciting help from the West in general?

LMB: Our brothers in Syria welcome international intervention provided it does not become some sort of military presence on Arab land. There is an international consensus on the Syrian and Libyan crisis. However, in the Libyan case the international community was more successful in getting united against Gadhafi.

TMENAR: *What are the short and long term future political aspirations of the Islamic movement in Libya?*

LMB: Firstly, to establish a political system based on democracy, the rule of law and the respect of human rights. Secondly, we aspire to achieve a pivotal role in the nascent democracy and to work side-by-side with our partners from other political persuasions to establish a civil and progressive Islamic political project. We hope that we will soon put the

corner stone for this project, Common Magharibia Project (North African Arab Countries Common Market).



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